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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author notes that lifelong learning is at the confluence of a number of separate streams from the recent past, each of which flows into the broad concept of lifelong learning and brings its own set of concerns that have helped generate a need to consider where the streams are going. These streams, or educational areas, are briefly discussed, focusing on various past and present changes in each area: adult education; postsecondary education; continuing and extension education; continuing education in the professions; career education, education and work, recurrent education; adult vocational education; community education; libraries and museums; the media; research; and foreign development. Concluding remarks cover suggestions for dealing with the problem of fragmentation in adult education and for building a unified adult education foundation. (EM)

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LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

OPENING REMARKS PREPARED FOR THE CONFERENCE ON
LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

HELD AT THE

WINGSPREAD CONFERENCE CENTER
RACINE, WISCONSIN
OCTOBER 21, 1976

BY

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No speaking engagement is ever easy, and this one is no exception. When my colleagues on the Planning Committee asked me to do it, I should have had the wisdom to say, "no," and my lack of wisdom on that occasion will appear magnified here. For how can one talk sensibly to an audience like this one in which every member has as good a claim to be up here as I do, and how can one talk sensibly in a few minutes about a subject whose boundaries seem to be expanding at almost an exponential rate.

In spite of what this effort will do to whatever little reputation for wisdom I may have had, I am delighted to have this opportunity, for it gives me a chance to pull together ideas that have been spinning around in my head for the past two years during which I have been conducting the Study of Adult Education and to say things to a group that can do something about them.

My assignment from the Planning Committee is to set the context for the next day and a half of deliberations. This conference has been a long time aborning, the Planning Committee and the CAEO, on whose behalf it was acting, wanted to make sure that this conference produces results commensurate with the rightness of this moment in time.

And what a moment this is! We are here to talk about the fastest growing sector in American education. We, who are here, represent twenty of the major organizations concerned with adult education, and together with the others here present, can reach out to speak to nearly every person concerned with the future of lifelong learning. A major new initiative for lifelong learning has just been written into the Education Amendments of 1976 by the Congress which, if now funded, can help all of us work together to chart directions for the renewal of the Adult Education Act of 1978.

We meet at a time when all of traditional education is a subject of intense national questioning. Can we not show that, in the concepts of adult education and lifelong learning, we have some of the answers that the American people are seeking?

We also meet at a time when our deliberations are running in parallel with major international discussions in UNESCO and OECD. This fortuitous timing can set our national discussion in an international context.

And, finally, we are meeting in time for our discussions to be heard by at least three broad-based national meetings in the next few months--the Bicentennial Congress of AEA and NAPCAE, the American Association for Continuing Higher Education, and the Commissioner's Bicentennial Congress on Lifelong Learning.

The Johnson and Kellogg Foundations also thought that this was a propitious time for these deliberations, and on behalf of all of us, I would like to thank them for their support. The list is long, also, of those who would like to have been here, but for whom there just was not room. We must speak to and for them and for the members of the CAEO organizations, and for all those whose expectations for this meeting have been raised by Sam Brightman in his articles.

I was not at the first Wingspread Conference. Many of you were. During this meeting, you will have to help all of us maintain the continuity between that event and this. One of the participants at that meeting expressed his feelings in a letter, as he contemplated this meeting. Bob Luke has this to say:

> "In eight years I am certain we have raised the literary level. I am certain we can say that we can collectively continue Music in the Parks...extend evening news coverage (from the one hour it was in 1963 to the two hours it is now)...produce, sell, and lend more books...enable a greater percentage of officers in the

military forces to earn a Ph.D....fill Lincoln Center and Kennedy Center every night...and know that millions of American adults are knowledgeable about the surface of the moon and of the planet Mars.

"But we had the national trauma of Viet Nam and Watergate... millions of children continue to either drop out of, or graduate from, high school and fail to find jobs...as a nation we continue to ignore UN sanctions on Rhodesia...tens of millions of American (including, perhaps, all of us planning to attend Wingspread II) view taxation as an evil to be resisted and avoided, with a determination that increases proportionate to the added wealth we acquire.

"True...we behaved, by and large, as rational human beings in formulation of a national policy in respect to Angola... the democratice processes overcame the imperial presidency... consumer education is getting a foothold in public policy (although family planning education seems to be slipping)... by and large, the book burners have been held in check... .

"But is adult education, as we usually define it, responsible for these advances (or so they seem to me) any more than we are for what I think are clear evidences of lack of progress? I doubt adult education can claim credit for the one or should be asked to share the blame for the other. This is not to say schools, colleges, libraries, correspondence agencies and the rest should not continue to do all that they have--and seek to improve and increase their efforts a hundred-fold. We should all seek to continue to struggle for, fight for, and work toward the increased realization of the nine tasks enumerated in the Imperatives for Action.

"But my personal opinion is that the way to do this is not through a Coalition of Adult Education Organizations or a political action counterpart. I don't oppose a continuation of such efforts--simply hope that at Wingspread II we examine realistically what we as adult educators know deep within us we can--and cannot--do. We know we can increase vocational competence...cultural awareness...interest in a knowledge about public affairs, personal health, and the effect of inflated air bags in reducing automobile fatalities. But we need to realistically ask ourselves how effective we--or our clients--want to be in stimulating rational problem solving, influencing changes in the prevailing economic philosophies... raising moral consciousness...or defending the process of involvement, shared decision-making, and community interdependence.

"Perhaps we should be content to seek increased public and private funds for those causes and programs in which we individually believe, be prepared to recognize that all of us pasture sacred cows, and ourselves be good examples of what we think are the behaviors required to 'work together in self-government...to measure up to our democratic ideals.'

"From one perspective that is a very low aspiration level. From another, it is possible that such a task might add up to being a more difficult task than the one we set for ourselves in 1969?"

Does Bob speak for others here? Or do you side more with these comments from another 1969 participant who is here today, Alex Charters?

"In general, the Imperatives did not catch the imagination of educators of adults and accordingly failed to exert the impact on American life that had been hoped or expected.

"Based on this record of substantial achievement extending over more than ten years, it is time for CAEO to make new thrusts in several directions. First, another national leadership conference should be called. It must be conceived as more than the Imperatives re-visited.

"While the types of results cannot and should not be predicted, one outcome might be a bold and comprehensive policy statement on adult education developed in the context of lifelong education in the mid-1970's. The Conference should also indicate ways of implementing the results.

"A new thrust would be in the direction of triggering every adult's imagination and developing his or her commitment to a self-directed learning plan.

"Educators of adults must review and reconsider financial and other resources for adult education. To a large extent, leaders in adult education have focused on influencing legislation at the federal level as the source of their funding. Especially as the expansion mood is now limited, attention should be given to other sources. Among them are state and local governments, large and small; foundations, voluntary groups, business, industry, and labor organizations. Developing alternative patterns of financing in the comprehensive field of adult education is urgent.

"Finally, CAEO should act to enhance the role of adult education in the mainstream of citizens' lives both nationally and internationally. It should establish relationships with other organizations or groups of organizations."

We know there are people who see a great future for lifelong learning. Senator Mondale has expressed his commitment, both in the legislation he sponsored and in an article in the October issue of Change.

But, you and I also know that there are skeptics as well. Mark Blaug, of the University of London, in an article to be published in Higher Education,

speaks of recurrent education as only the latest of educational bandwagons and comments critically on the grandiose claims he hears being made for recurrent education in international circles.

You and I know that education is not high on the priority list of concerns of most people and, when it is, it is likely to be because of the high cost, not the high benefits it brings.

As we deliberate here, we need to be realistically aware of the climate out there--what is the public interest in lifelong learning? What is the message that we want to go forth from this place? That is the challenge--what is the 1976 Wingspread message about lifelong learning in America's third century?

Perhaps I should stop here but I would like to say something more to set the context for what we are about.

I would like to think of our present situation as being at the confluence of a number of separate streams from our recent past, each of which flows into the broad concept of lifelong learning, each of which brings its own set of concerns that have helped generate a need to consider where the streams are going. Are the streams going to follow their own separate courses, some in banks so narrow, they flood and lose their way, others with so little water, they threaten to dry up completely; while others continue their separate courses as before? Or are they going to flow into a broad river which, taking strength from each separate stream, will help all who wish to travel on it to their respective destinations.

We seem to be at a point where the answers are in our hands. We can leave the streams to follow their "natural courses," or we can intervene with appropriate strategies to influence the directions they will take. Let us look then briefly at these streams--at adult education, at post-secondary education, at continuing and extension education, at career and

recurrent education, at adult vocational education, at community education, and others and see what each is like at this point of confluence.

Adult Education

Of all the streams, this is the one with the best claim to being the main tributary into which all of the others flow. Seen from a distance, it appears to be a single broad stream, but closer inspection shows that it has split up into separate streamlets called, "adult basic education," "high school equivalency," "Americanization," "English as a Second Language," while other parts flow through postsecondary continuing education, and, indeed, through all of the other streams. It is this fact about adult education that has brought us to this point of confluence where we need to consider whether there is any reason to bring these separate streams together and, if so, what can do it.

Adult education has a mighty sweep to it. Some 17 million persons are in it according to the National Center for Educational Statistics--or is it 32 million as ETS found, or 45 million, as the Carnegie Commission said, or even the 80 million that Stanley Moses projected for this date? The confusion about how to count the numbers in the stream is one of the things that the imperatives should deal with.

The adult education stream comes to the confluence (to press on with the metaphor) channeled through thousands of providing organizations of every type from public schools to private voluntary organizations. Over 10,000 public local education agencies conducted adult education programs in 1974. Some know clearly where they are in the stream, while others are not even sure what stream they are in or try to be in many at once. Whether and how to sort out the places of all of the providers will be another concern for our engineer-strategists.

How much money flows in this stream? Certainly many billions, but just how many seems, at this point, more a matter of speculation than hard numbers. There are 80 million or so dollars appropriated for Adult Education Act, but the National Advisory Council for Extension and Continuing Education shows some $2.3 billion allocated in 1973 for almost 200 federal programs. How to get a better handle on this aspect of things is another imperative.

Finally, Adult Education comes to the confluence with a considerable amount of formal structure:

Thousands of individuals who identify themselves professionally as educators of adults;

State and national organizations representing these people;

University programs committed to preparing more educators of adults and to research in adult education;

A Division of Adult Education in the USOE, an Adult Education Act which it administers, and a National Advisory Council created by the Act;

Adult education units in most state education agencies;

A body of literature containing the theory and traditions on which much of contemporary practice is based.

With so much going for it, you may well wonder why I have called adult education only one of the streams, rather than considering it the river into which the other streams flow. Before answering that, let's look, much more briefly, at each of the other streams, looking primarily at what they bring to this point of confluence.

Postsecondary Education

Strictly speaking, since almost all participants in postsecondary education are beyond the age of compulsory schooling and are legally adults, all of postsecondary education could be considered part of adult education. However, at the present moment in history, and for purposes of discussions like this one, it is probably most helpful to exclude the traditional student and to limit concern to "those persons who have left the traditionally sequenced educational system." This definition suggests that a salient feature of lifelong learning is that it does not assume as a given fact the traditional sequences of education. To be sure, in recent years, post-secondary education has been leading the assault on traditional sequencing. Some numbers suggest the now familiar story: approximately half the students in postsecondary institutions are part-time; the average age in community colleges is 28. And in 1974, there were over 1 million students over 35 years of age. Some program labels also suggest the dimension of the move-ment in postsecondary education: credit by examination; external degrees; University Without Walls; credit for experience; open learning; week-end colleges; competency based degrees; contract learning; and nontraditional education--(Some might even treat this as a separate stream.) In the private sector, we can add the proprietary schools.

These are but some of the means postsecondary education has sought to reach out to its so-called "new clientele," an outreach that is projected to grow in intensity as we approach the 1980 dropoff in the size of the traditional college-age cohort. Some of this new clientele are seeking degrees, some want career refreshment or upgrading. Some want personal development, and some want occupational alternatives and companionship.

So, postsecondary education comes to the confluence with a growing body of experience in dealing with the varied learning needs of adults and a powerful survival drive that will lead it to seek to pull those non-participants into its stream. Indeed, it too may claim that it is the river into which all of the other streams should flow.

Continuing and Extension Education

More a streamlet within postsecondary education than a stream in its own right. However, it deserves separate attention because, long before the current interest in adult learners, it was in the extension divisions that postsecondary education provided any service to adults. Now as the rest of postsecondary education awakens to the needs of adults, there is a question as to whether the channels cut by extension education should be widened to accommodate the larger flow, or whether the waters of extension education should be diverted to help swell the main stream of postsecondary education. However it is done in particular institutions, there is no question of the contribution extension education will make to the formation of the river of lifelong learning.

Continuing Education in the Professions

Itself more a streamlet within Continuing and Extension Education, but also because of the growing role of the professions themselves, legitimately considered a stream in its own right. This is a stream that has already overflowed its banks in many places and is rapidly reaching flood state. In recent years nearly every profession has realized the need of its members for continued learning. Much of the impetus comes from the rapidly growing knowledge base of most professions, but some comes too from a growing concern with public accountability. State legislatures are being pressed

to mandate participation in continuing education programs as a condition for relicensure, and several have given into the pressure. The concept of continued learning in a profession is certainly in harmony with the direction of lifelong learning, but whether mandating education is an effective way to achieve that learning is moot.

Our lifelong learning engineers are going to have to do some hard thinking about how this powerful stream should be related to the others.

Career Education, Education and Work, Recurrent Education

The stream metaphor works nicely here. Once upon a time there were two streams, one called "education" and the other called "work." Most people floated, swam or were pulled down the education stream to the point where it entered the work stream. Then they stayed in or on it until it emptied into the ocean of retirement. It was also generally believed that the farther one went down the education stream before entering the work stream, the easier it would be to navigate in the work stream and the happier one's voyage. Then some researchers began to study those streams. They noted that a lot of people never made it out of the education stream into the work stream, they saw that some who got very quickly out of the education stream did better in the work stream than many who went the full length of the education stream. They saw that some people drowned in the work stream, many got swept up on the banks and could not get back in, and many seemed very unahppy with the trip down stream. So they called in some engineers, one of whom was named Sid Marland, to see what they could do. And those engineers had some great arguments--some wanted to put the two streams together, some wanted to keep the streams separate, but make it easy to move back and forth between them. Some wanted to shorten both streams just the education stream. And some wanted to change the flow so that one would be for a time

in the education stream, then in the work stream, and then back to education in a continuing alternation.

Well, the engineers are still experimenting with various schemes, but on some things almost all are agreed: the two streams should never again be as sharply separated as they once were, and some separation at some portions of the way is better than continuous and indiscriminant mixing. One of the challenges to our engineers will be how to mix the waters of work and education in the river of lifelong learning so as to preserve the qualities of each separate and together.

Adult Vocational Education

Some of that mixing is taking place in this stream. It is the one in which over a third of the learners in the ETS survey placed themselves, and 43% of the would-be learners said they would like to be here. It includes the massive amount of education provided by employers, including the military, either directly on company time at company sites, or by support of education taken elsewhere. Seymour Lusterman estimates that employer training expenses now run about $2 billion a year, and Robert Craig cites a figure of $100 billion. In one survey, 28% of participants indicated their employers as the source of support for their education. Much of the part-time education offered by postsecondary education is vocational. Vocational Education Act funds support thousands of adults in public school and community college vocational programs, and still other thousands are supported by CETA and other manpower funds. And many individuals support themselves in proprietary schools which are largely vocational. One of the central issues for the future is how large a part of the whole this stream is to be.

Other Streams

There are other streams flowing toward the confluence which need only be briefly noted though each, in its own way, is a force that must be reckoned with. There is the community education stream which is showing that the traditional schoolhouse can be a place of learning for all members of the community for hours in the day and days in the year when it traditionally stood unused. Community education is showing that learning, both for youth and adults, can take place in many places in the community--in libraries, museums, churches, work places and homes. It is showing that people of different ages can learn together from each other and from the world in which they live.

There are the engineers directing this stream who would also like to make it the river into which all the others flow.

Libraries and Museums

Still another stream, or perhaps it might best be called a spring, at this point--because it has only recently surfaced--is that composed of libraries, museums and other cultural institutions. Public libraries have always served the needs of the independent learner but, in the past few years, some librarians have been developing specific programs to serve independent learners and persons working in such programs as external degrees. More recently, under a FIPSE grant, several New York State libraries are adding a specific counseling function.

Museums, too, are beginning to recognize that they can play a larger role in providing services to adult learners.

The Smithsonian has an extensive educational program serving some 38,000 persons and, in New York State, we are beginning the development of an Adult Cultural Education Center as part of our new State museum program.

The more informal, less structured character of the library and museum programs may serve, in part, a different clientele than more formal programs, in part, serve as an adjunct to them and, in part, be a bridge leading people from less formal to more formal modes of learning.

Then there is the media stream--perhaps the most pervasive, powerful, and ill-defined of all. We know that the media, especially television, are powerful forces in our lives--but how powerful under what circumstances, and for which people is conjecture. We also know that all of the media can be effectively used for teaching and for reaching out to many on the banks of our streams. Many observers feel that the full educational potential of the media, including computers, lies in the future, but years of saying that makes some wonder when the future will come. Designing the place for media will be another powerful challenge to our engineers.

There is the research stream, different in kind from the other streams, but rather than going to another metaphor, let's stay with this one. At this point of confluence, we are beginning to understand more than we did before about life stages, motivations, personality development, cognition, and cognitive styles, and about the interplay of these with each other and the needs, wants, fears, and hopes of individuals. Studies of the brain, of the psychochemistry of thought and emotions, and of how differing people under differing circumstances learn and forget and put learning into action, are producing new insights that will in time influence how we think about lifelong learning. Research, more directly on educational matters, is also producing new understanding in such areas as assessment of learning, the organization of instruction to achieve specific results, group processes, and the effects of different organizational and financing arrangements.

This rich research stream should help our engineers design a better

lifelong learning river, although to understand and assimilate it all, will not make their task easier.

Finally, there is a stream that is flowing from distant lands but can have important influence on the direction of our river. That is the stream of foreign development, particularly as these are channeled by UNESCO and OECD. Significant developments have been taking place in both of these agencies and in a number of member countries to chart the future development of the education of adults.

A draft, "Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education" will be considered by a UNESCO conference in November and a similar OECD document is also being reviewed by member countries. In addition, several European nations have advanced experiments in changing the relation between work and education. These developments can be of great assistance to our engineers.

Using the stream metaphor, I have tried to suggest what our imperative is here at this Wingspread Conference. It is to deliberate on the direction or directions we think these streams should take in the future--the goals and objectives, if you will, of lifelong learning--and then to provide specific guidance as we can on the action imperatives that will help turn the streams in those directions.

We have tried in the title of this conference to suggest one source for defining those goals--"The Public Interest." We hope that those of you who are not educators by profession will particularly help us to find that public interest.

There is another message in this discussion. We are all aware that each of the streams has its own advocates. Some of these advocates, by their actions, would apparently rather see their streams kept separate and small, rather than see them swell to new dimensions in the larger river.

All of education is suffering from fragmentation--too many conflicting voices are heard in the halls of Congress and state legislatures. This is equally true of adult education. If we cannot merge our differences in a common effort to meet the needs of those whom we profess to serve, none of us are going to be able to meet those needs effectively. Action to deal with this problem is one of the imperatives to which we direct your attention in the draft document.

Perhaps one way to get at building a foundation for unity is to consider the learning needs of our society to which all providers should respond. A position paper prepared for the 1976 Annual Conference of the North Carolina Adult Education Association, under the leadership of Ed Boone, nicely sets forth these needs. I commend the statement to your attention.

Briefly, to summarize it, the needs it identifies are the following:

1. The need for basic literacy--not just the traditional basic skills but those functional competencies that have been dramatically spotlighted by the Adult Performance Level study.
2. Needs derived from our changing economic structure.
3. Needs generated by change and growth in individuals.
4. Needs generated by the changing structure of the family--particularly the growing evidence that people need greater opportunities to learn how to "parent."
5. Needs derived from the changing nature of the community--needs to which the problem solving programs under HEA Title I have begun to address but for which much more remains to be done.

Another factor that should help to unite us is to recognize that we are a "Nation of Learners." Studies inspired by the original work of Allen Tough reveal that almost every American adult undertakes one or more learning

activities each year. These self-planned and initiated activities account for perhaps two-thirds of the total learning efforts of adults, of which only a minor part is done for credit. The potential that this "learning force" represents should give every provider more than enough to do.

Important also here is the increasing recognition that the capacity for growth and the need for learning never ends but continues throughout life, making attention to the learning needs of every age group, including the elderly, an important facet of a lifelong learning strategy, helping to give literal meaning to the adjective "lifelong." Indeed, it is being recognized that education can both help make lives longer and long lives happier.

Another group whose learning needs have been neglected are handicapped adults. They too have a place in a national strategy as do such other by-passed populations as prisoners, native Americans, migrants, urban ghetto dwellers, isolated rural people, and recent non-English speaking, often illegal, immigrants.

In Part B, Congress has just given us a great opportunity to pull ourselves together. I know that the bill was not everyone's preferred vehicle to moving ahead, but the bill did get the endorsement of some 25 national organizations and it did get through and is now law. It gives to the Assistant Secretary broad authority to plan, assess, and coordinate lifelong learning, and it includes, in the scope of lifelong learning, all of the streams I have mentioned and more.

The task now is to define the priorities for the work to be done. Wingspread can make a major contribution to that task. I am not proposing that we focus only on the law and its implementation. But the fact that the law exists, can give an added dimension of reality to our deliberations. For, if some of the imperatives and recommendations that we agree on here

require funds or federal action, we have at hand a means that may help turn them to reality.

Finally, let me put our deliberations in a still broader context. Our society is troubled in many ways. More education, more learning is not the single or sole answer to our troubles. But, at a time when so many in education are in retreat, do not we who believe in the power of learning throughout life have a message for all? One expression of that message I found beautifully stated in George Bonnam's editorial in the October Change magazine. Billy Wireman, President of Eckerd College, speaks of the academic world, generally, in terms that can be applied to all of us, and so I slightly paraphrase his statement:

> We are a learning community committed to a learning society. Our principal business being learning, we seek, primarily but not exclusively through the life of the mind, to liberate human beings into an authentic and effective personhood by engaging them in a lifelong learning experience characterized by rigor, flexibility, and a concern for humanistic, democratic, and moral values...
>
> The skills necessary to maintain oneself in a lifelong learning experience are found in the mutual interaction and relative dominance of four basic learning units: learning to learn, learning to do, learning to care, and learning to be.

Now is the time to begin writing the Wingspread II message.

Commissioner Nyquist likes to end his speeches with a little story which is quite fitting here. A farmer entered his mule in the Kentucky Derby. When asked why, he said, "I knew he couldn't win, but I thought the association would do him some good." I am sure our association here will do lifelong learning a lot of good. Let us spread our wings and go to it. Thank you.